

Following a request last month by Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.), the U.S. Department of Justice has indicated it is reviewing statements and actions by big banks regarding consumer debit card fees.

“I am pleased that the Justice Department is taking this request seriously,” Congressman Welch said. “While big banks like Bank of America beat a hasty retreat on their debit card fee strategies, I have no doubt that they will continue their quest to dig deeper into the pockets of struggling consumers. As they consider their next move, they should be aware that there is a cop actively on the beat.”

In a letter to Congressman Welch, Assistant Attorney General Ronald Weich said, “The Department of Justice is reviewing the statements and actions by banks and their trade associations regarding possible increases in consumer fees for using debit cards. Please be assured that if it finds that individuals, banks, or other parties may have violated antitrust laws, the Department will take appropriate action.”

Assistant Attorney General Weich also noted that “the Department of Justice has a strong interest in ensuring vigorous competition among banks in the debit card services they provide to consumers, and in recent years, it has vigorously pursued both criminal and civil cases in the industry.”

To see the full letter, [CLICK HERE](#).

Congressman Welch led opposition in the House to the debit card fees announced by Bank of America and others big banks earlier this year. [In an October letter to Attorney General Eric Holder](#), Congressman Welch raised concerns over whether big banks had coordinated their debit card fee strategies in violation of federal antitrust laws.

Bank of America and other big banks shelved their plans to charge customers fees to use their debit cards following widespread consumer outrage and pressure from Congress. However, according to press reports, many banks have quietly moved to increase other fees such as

those for replacing a debit card, wiring money or maintaining a checking account.